

RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)
FINAL MINUTES
January 25, 2005
BLM National Training Center
9828 North 31st Avenue
Phoenix, Arizona

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Frances Werner, Lorraine Eiler, Lee Aitken, Carolyn Loder, Steve Saway, Peggy Titus, Tina Clark, Lamar Smith, Ty Kelly, Glen Collins, Sandee McCullen, Jan Holder, Bill Branan, Jay Adkins, Larry Nelson

ABSENT: None

BLM STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: Elaine Zielinski, Michael Taylor, Deborah Stevens, Don Applegate, Carol Kershaw, Tim Smith, Bill Civish, Ron Hooper, Bill Coulloudon, Don Applegate, Becky Hammond, Gene Dahlem, Shela McFarlin, Tom Zale, Mike Henderson

PRESENTERS & GUESTS: Dr. Linda Kennedy, Audubon Research Ranch, Larry Killman, Greystone Environmental Consultants, and Jim Maynard, Arizona Cattle Growers

AGENDA ITEM: Meeting called to Order. (Frances Werner, RAC Chairperson)
Welcome and Introduction of RAC Members.

DISCUSSION: The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. on the morning of January 25, 2005 at the BLM National Training Center. Frances thanked everyone for attending. Greetings and introductions were then made around the room.

AGENDA ITEM: Review October 27, 2004 meeting minutes.

DISCUSSION: Frances Werner made the motion to approve the minutes; Lamar Smith seconded the motion.

ACTION: Motion carried

AGENDA ITEM: BLM State Director's Introduction, Update on Legislation, Regulations, and other Statewide Issues. (Elaine Zielinski, BLM Arizona State Director and other BLM staff.)

DISCUSSION: Welcome: Happy New Year. I'm happy to see all of you here today, and hope you had a great holiday season. We have a full agenda today, and training for the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Administration (S&Gs) tomorrow. The field training will be conducted on the Sonoran Desert National Monument.

Before we get started, I have a few items I want to mention.

Organizational Effectiveness Update: BLM Arizona is moving right along with the organizational effectiveness. The reorganization proposal for the Gila District was approved by the BLM Washington Office on November 23, 2004. The Gila District will consist of the Safford Field Office, Tucson Field Office and the Gila District Office to be located in Sierra Vista. The Gila District Manager position has been advertised. The Phoenix District proposal has been submitted to the Arizona State Office for review, and the Arizona Strip District proposal is expected at the end of January or early February for State Office review.

I'd like to welcome Arizona's newest field managers, Rebecca Heick, Yuma Field Manager, Tim Smith, Lake Havasu Field Manager and Wayne King, Kingman Field Manager.

Personnel Update: I just wanted to let you know that after 40+ years with the BLM, and 20 years with Arizona BLM, Beau McClure has retired. He has been a special assistant to me on international affairs and border issues, including the leadership of the Borderland Management Task Force. He has made significant contributions to the U.N.'s Desertification Program and other international issues. It is very important to keep the momentum going with the U.S./Mexico border issues, so I have asked Shela McFarlin to take over several program areas that Beau managed.

Secretarial Order on Land Exchange Process: Secretarial Order 3258, *Policy Guidance Concerning Land Valuation and Legislative Exchanges; 12/30/04*, follows on previous steps taken to ensure that the Department of the Interior's land actions are transparent and above reproach regarding property valuation. In November, 2003, Secretary Norton consolidated all DOI appraisal functions into a separate entity within the Department's National Business Center.

This order mandates: 1) the Department's adherence to nationally recognized appraisal standards in all land transactions; 2) requires full disclosure when Congress orders, or the Department proposes, use of any alternative methods of valuation; 3) sets stringent criteria and limitations on the Department's use of appraisals prepared for land owner's or land action proponents rather than directly for the Department; 4) and requires senior management determination that actions supported by such appraisals support the Department's mission. We've provided you with a copy of the Secretarial Order.

Wilderness Characteristic Land Use Planning Policy: In coordination with the Arizona BLM field offices, the Arizona State Office Resources staff has developed State Director Guidance for the Arizona Land Use Planning efforts. It provides guidance on management units, land use allocations, comprehensive travel management, and visual resource management. It was issued in December 2004, and Mike Taylor will be covering the specifics of this guidance during his status update of the on-going land use plans in Arizona.

Burns Amendment – WHB Sale Authority: In the FY 2005 Department of the Interior Appropriations Bill, Congress included language amending the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 to require the sale of certain wild, free-roaming horses and burros (*burros are included in the bill language*). The horses and burros covered by this amendment are defined as animals that are more than 10 years old or that have been offered unsuccessfully for adoption three times. The amendment became law when President Bush signed the appropriations bill on December 6, 2004.

As the BLM considers this new direction for the wild horse and burro program, the agency wants to remind the public of what remains constant. The BLM is committed to the protection and preservation of wild horses and burros on the range: this part of the law and our current program efforts have not changed.

The BLM is also committed to continuing to maximize efforts to ensure that animals removed from the range are placed in good homes. BLM accomplishes this through the Adopt-a-Horse program, which has placed more than 203,000 animals in private care over the past 32 years.

The BLM is committed to finding the best possible situations for these animals and is currently developing guidelines to comply with the new law in an orderly and responsible manner. A team of folks, lead by Don Simpson from BLM Wyoming, are meeting at the BLM National Training Center from January 19 – February 2, to discuss the logistics of transferring ownership of wild horses to private

individuals and/or groups, i.e., bill of sale, branding, transportation, processing, costs involved and other policy issues.

In addition, the team will be discussing ways or opportunities to transfer the eligible wild horses into a care program, similar to what BLM is now providing. One key point is that no horses (ten years or older) will be sold, using the sale authority at any wild horse and burro adoptions. The sale activities will be kept separate.

Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act: The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act was signed into law by President Bush on December 8, 2004. This new legislation replaces the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program.

In summary, it provides a 10-year multi-agency authority to collect fees for BLM, NPS, FWS, BOR and FS. The key provisions include: a fee authority which differs for the NPS and FWS, and the BLM, BOR and FS; public involvement to establish a Recreation Resource Advisory Committee(s) to make recommendations on implementation of recreation fees, establishment of recreation fee sites, and expansion or limitation of the program. In addition, a new multi-agency national recreation pass called the “America the Beautiful Pass” will be developed. We’ve provided a handout with some points on the new legislation.

Since this legislation lays out some new policy, BLM staff can provide a more in depth presentation at a future RAC Meeting.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Establishment of Monitoring Procedures on the Audubon Research Ranch (Dr. Linda Kennedy, Audubon Research Scientist)

DISCUSSION: PowerPoint Presentation (Printout available upon request.)

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: BLM Program Orientation for the RAC (Michael Taylor, BLM Deputy State Director Resources)

DISCUSSION: Michael Taylor provided highlights of the multiple use programs BLM Arizona manages. The presentation was also focused on BLM’s priority programs in FY 2005, and was meant to give the new RAC members an overview of the regulatory and administrative policies and resource issues associated with the programs. **(PowerPoint Presentation available upon request.)**

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Transportation and Rights-of-Way (Carol Kershaw, BLM Lands and Realty Coordinator)

DISCUSSION: Carol Kershaw provided an overview of the laws, regulations and guidelines as they relate to the BLM Right-of Way Program. Her presentation covered Rights-of Way (Title V – of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act) and how BLM manages the program through established Corridors, 1) minimizing the proliferation of separate rights of way; 2) minimizing adverse environmental impacts; 3) allocating certain public lands for utility corridor purposes; 4) helping streamline evaluation and analysis of site-specific utility proposals and rights-of-way applications; 5) providing industry with

certainty for infrastructure planning purposes; and 6) providing a tool for managers to plan for and consolidate utility rights-of-way uses. **(PowerPoint available upon request.)**

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Transportation and Rights-of-Way (Lee Aitken, RAC Transportation/ROW Representative)

DISCUSSION: Lee provided a short overview from the utility industry's perspective of the rights-of-way application process and the analysis and public participation needed to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) before any rights-of-way can be approved.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment Period - None

DISCUSSION: None

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Arizona Land Use Planning Update (Michael Taylor, BLM Deputy State Director for Resources)

DISCUSSION: Mike provided the significant updates to the land use plans in process. Handout provided, which contains a comprehensive status update for all the plans.

ACTION: Provide standard update at the next RAC meeting, and schedule any RAC briefings on significant drafts – Proposed Alternatives, Draft RMP/EIS – when field offices are ready.

AGENDA ITEM: BLM Field Manager Office Rangeland Resource Team Member Proposals

DISCUSSION: Shela McFarlin provided the RAC with Tucson's recommendations for appointment and reappointments of three members to the Las Cienegas Rangeland Resource Team for consideration and approval by the RAC at the May 3, 2005 meeting.

ACTION: RAC to discuss and consider the RRT recommendations at the next meeting.

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Questions on Field Manager Reports (*Reports are at the bottom of the minutes*)

DISCUSSION: None

ACTION: Report due for next RAC meeting.

AGENDA ITEM: Report from the Standards & Guidelines Working Group (Lamar Smith, Chair)

DISCUSSION: Lamar gave an overview of the literature review the S&G subcommittee completed for the Sonoran Desert National Monument Resource Management Plan development. A letter was sent to Teri Raml with the recommendations by the S&G subcommittee on the literature review.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion on Public Relations Working Group (Steve Saway, Chair)

DISCUSSION: Steve will be preparing a quarterly *RAC Notes* for distribution in January or February.

ACTION: Draft RAC Notes was sent to Public Relations Working Group for review. Next issue will be published and posted to the Internet – RAC homepage in January or February 2005.

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion on Recreation Working Group (Tina Clark, Chair)

DISCUSSION: The Recreation Group was addressed by Karen Bult, Deputy Director and Tourism Development Manager, Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT). The meeting was a “brainstorming session” on marketing BLM’s rich recreation resources in collaboration with AOT and local Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs). Strategies for enhanced collaboration between AOT and BLM were discussed.

ACTION: It was recommended that the sub-group investigate opportunities for increased exposure in AOT & CVB marketing efforts, publications and websites.

AGENDA ITEM: Report from Wild Horse and Burro Working Group (Frances Werner, Chair)

DISCUSSION: Mike Taylor provided an update on the wild horse and burro management program, and the having reached Appropriate Management Levels in the herd management areas. He also provided an update on the Kingman facilities and planned move, and the successful wild horse and burro adoptions for calendar year 2004.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Report from Planning Working Group (Glen Collins, Chair)

DISCUSSION: At the Working Group meeting on Monday afternoon, Mike Taylor and Greg Simmons gave a briefing on the Arizona State Director Guidance for Achieving Consistency in AZ Land Use Planning Efforts which was issued by Instruction Memo AZ 2005-007 on Dec. 10, 2004. There was also a review of the status of the seven land use plans currently being prepared in the Arizona BLM Field Offices.

RAC members are encouraged to participate in scoping meetings that will be held by the Phoenix Field Office (PFO) during the coming months on the land use plan for the Sonoran Desert National Monument - South Phoenix Planning Area. The PFO will be presenting their Agua Fria National Monument - Bradshaw/Harquahala Area Land Use Plan recommendations to the State Director's staff for their review in early February. A briefing session for RAC members will also be held before the recommendations are released to the public.

Since the State Trust Land Initiative was rejected by the voters in the November election, potential BLM - State exchanges are stalemated. The Working Group wants to be kept informed of other land exchange and land sale proposals so that the RAC can help ensure that land disposals are confined to lands identified for disposal through the Bureau's land use planning process.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Report from Off-Highway Vehicle Use Working Group (Sande McCullen, Chair)

DISCUSSION: The route evaluations for the Middle Gila Conservation Area southeast of Phoenix are almost completed. Three alternatives will go to each of the two management agencies and the Arizona State Land Department for development of a “preferred alternative”. The Middle Gila Conservation Partnership (MGCP) will submit a report at the next RAC meeting with plans to present to the BLM Arizona State Office. It is expected the alternatives will go to the public for review before the end of the year.

Discussion regarding the involvement of recreationists in the route evaluations with the activity plans. It was felt there were probably too many involved in the MGCP evaluations, causing a delay in the process, but Field Offices (FO) were asked to consider at least one representative from the recreation community - --- non-motorized or motorized.

Encouraged FO’s to consider urban OHV parks or riding areas as well as rural areas with specialty areas in there Resource Management Plans.

It was suggested Mike Ahrens, BLM Barstow OHV Coordinator, be invited to the Kingman RAC meeting to discuss the operations of an OHV park. Sandee is encouraging several of the BLM planners to travel to CA to visit several of the successful parks.

Sandee will be attending the NOHVCC Conference in Ontario, CA in March and will attend the training seminar for a Master Tread Trainer for Tread Lightly. She has also been involved in developing an Adventure Trail education booklet for elementary-aged riders. She encouraged FO’s to involve riding education and ethics wherever possible.

ACTION: Sandee will be sending looking at other States OHV guidelines and developing draft OHV Guidelines for Arizona Public Lands for the OHV subcommittee to consider at the May 2005 meeting.

AGENDA ITEM: Annual Work Plan Update (Frances Werner, RAC Chair)

DISCUSSION: Handout was provided with the RAC updates and the annual plan was adopted.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Discussion on Future Quarterly Meetings/Locations (BLM State Director and RAC Members)

DISCUSSION: The RAC selected Kingman in May, with the fall meeting – August or early September in Safford.

ACTION: Next meeting in Kingman – May 3-4, 2005.

MEETING ADJOURNED January 25, 2005 @ 4:30 pm

Arizona RAC Field Manager Reports – January 25, 2005

Arizona Strip Field Office

1. SUBJECT: RMP Planning Effort

ISSUE SUMMARY: After receiving Arizona State Office direction on Land Use Plan Consistency the Arizona Strip moving forward in the planning effort. On January 20th the planning team briefed the Cooperating and Federal Agencies on the Chapter 2 Decision Tables. It will be the first time the agencies have met since August 2004. The next major step in the process is to complete the draft plan. The current

planning schedule calls for delivery of the draft plan to the State Office for review in April and to the public this summer.

The plan consistency direction dealt with Wilderness Characteristics, Travel, Visual Resource Management and Management Units.

2. SUBJECT: Grand Canyon Trust Acquisition of the Kane Ranch

ISSUE SUMMARY: On January 18, a Grand Canyon Trust representative met with the Arizona Strip concerning their acquisition of the grazing permits on the Kane and Two Mile Ranches. They recently received a completed appraisal of the properties that, in their opinion, is in line with their purchase price offer. GCT indicated their "Option to Buy" is a "solid deal" and they are confident in meeting the payment deadline of July, 2005. Their objective for this meeting was to convey their desire to work with the BLM, and "be a part of the community". Without providing any written management plan for their new operation, they indicated their first priorities will be establishing an ecological baseline through resource inventory, restoration of historic structures and protection of known cultural resources.

3. SUBJECT: R&PP application from the Virgin River Domestic Wastewater Improvement District (VRDWID)

ISSUE SUMMARY: Representatives from the VRDWID have filed a Recreation & Public Purposes (R&PP) application with the AZ Strip to build a treatment plant to serve 2,220 current residents in the District. The current number of individual septic systems is contributing to high nitrate levels documented by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. Considerable amounts of infrastructure, including lift stations and pumps, have been damaged in the recent floods. This, compounded with many years of drought, has increased the potential of contamination. The land under application is not identified for disposal in the current RMP. It is, however, identified for disposal in the draft plan revision. The acreage in the proposal exceeds the cap placed on land disposals in the existing Biological Opinion from the USFWS, necessitating additional Section 7 consultation. The needs of, and regulatory constraints provided for T&E species is making it difficult to meet the needs of growing communities in a timely fashion.

4. SUBJECT: Condor Fledglings on the Arizona Strip

ISSUE SUMMARY: On December 17, 2004, eleven condors were placed in the holding facility on the Vermilion Cliffs to await their February release, bringing the Northern Arizona/Southern Utah Population to a total of 61 birds. This population includes two newcomers that fledged in November, one in the Grand Canyon and one in the Vermilion Cliffs. The Vermilion Cliffs fledgling was recaptured recently, treated for an obstruction in the digestive system, and then placed in the holding facility to be released at a later date. The remains of an adult condor, that died sometime in January, are being tested to determine the cause of death. The cause of death was not immediately determinable, with no signs of trauma apparent. The two fledglings confirm at least two breeding pairs in the population. The population size of 61 with 2 breeding pairs, bring the condors closer to, but still a long way from, the 150 birds with 15 breeding pairs required for each population to consider the condors for de-listing.

Phoenix Field Office

1. SUBJECT: Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument

ISSUE SUMMARY: Established with the purpose of assisting the BLM staff, plan and carry-out special projects and activities, the Friends volunteer group elected officers in October 2004 and held their inaugural on December 5. Board Members are: Julie Sherman as President; Peter Welsh as Vice

President; Travis Holtzclaw as Secretary; Jim Stewart as Treasurer; Jim Vaaler as Director at Large (three year-term); Donna Ruiz y Costello as Director at large (one year-term); and Shelley Rasmussen as Director at Large (two year-term). The Friends group is currently pursuing three projects on the monument. These projects are:

1. Pronghorn Project – Rescheduled for January 23 and February 6. Volunteers will gather pronghorn pellets for a study to determine pronghorn food habits. The study is being undertaken by ASU zoologist David E. Brown.
2. Weed/Vegetation Control – Salt Cedar/Tamarisk. Volunteers will remove newly invading salt cedar/tamarisk species along the river channel, streams, and tributaries within the AFNM, using only manual methods.
3. Trail Monitor/Maintenance – Volunteers will be on site at least 2 days per month to walk the length of the Badger Springs Trail. The purpose of the Trail Monitors is to provide visibility for the Monument by meeting and talking with visitors, and providing trails which are safe, functional, pleasing, and free of debris to the user.

2. SUBJECT: Painted Rock Dedication Ceremony – March 10, 2005

ISSUE SUMMARY: A celebration to commemorate the completion of a 10-year interpretative project will be held on March 10, 2005, during Archaeology Month. The Painted Rock Petroglyph Site, located approximately 90 miles southwest of Phoenix, Arizona, provides an extraordinary “window” to the past.

3. SUBJECT: Partnership with Local High School

ISSUE SUMMARY: Dean Fernandez, PFO fire Crew Coordinator, is assisting in teaching a course on wildland fire suppression at Metro Tech High School from mid-January through March. Goal is to gain more community support and help youth develop career building skills. Several students graduating from this program have signed on with BLM during fire season.

4. SUBJECT: New Fire Station located near Wickenburg Dedication

ISSUE SUMMARY: A dedication ceremony will be held in May 2005 to allow the local community an opportunity to visit and learn about the new fire station just outside of Wickenburg, Arizona. The fire station was recently built in anticipation of 50 to 150 fire actions per year on public lands in Arizona. This fire station will be staffed year-round by BLM-Phoenix Field Office staff, with an increased number of at least 18 staff during the summer months. A helicopter will be at the Wickenburg site from May through August. The site may be used as a staging area for crews during high fire danger.

5. SUBJECT: Sonoran Desert National Monument Advisory Council

ISSUE SUMMARY: Status of Sonoran Desert National Monument Advisory Council
As of January 12, 2005, the Charter for the Sonoran Desert National Monument Advisory Council remains in the Secretary of the Interior’s office, awaiting approval and signature. Following Charter approval by the Secretary, and as quickly as practicable, BLM will publish a Federal Register Notice initiating a 45-day member nomination period. BLM will also initiate a recruiting effort that will include press releases, letters to likely nominators and nominees, and a widespread e-mailing. Documents pertinent to the nomination process will be included in the mailings and a website with pertinent documents and information will be established and cited in all releases, mailings and e-mailings. Following the nomination period, BLM will assess the qualifications of nominees and make recommendations for members and alternates for each position. Those recommendations will be forwarded to the Secretary through the BLM Director. Following appointment by the Secretary, the

council will begin functioning. The monument manager will be the Designated Federal Officer for the council.

6. SUBJECT: Interagency Solutions Sought to Resolve Shooting-Related Concerns near Table Mesa Road

ISSUE SUMMARY: There is a growing concern on the large amount of illegal activity and irresponsible shooting occurring at Table Mesa Road, near the Agua Fria National Monument, north of Phoenix. The activities occurring in this area pose a very real danger to other recreational users, residents, workers, drivers along Interstate 17 and existing infrastructure and a gas pipeline. In addition, there is a large amount of trash and potentially hazardous materials left in the area just two months after an extensive clean up effort. A large number of complaints about these activities have caused the Phoenix Field Office to focus on some management actions that will help address the illegal activity and irresponsible shooting.

In an effort to explore suitable alternative solutions to these issues, a meeting was held on January 12, at the Phoenix Field Office. Participants in the meeting included representatives from Congressman John Shadegg's Office, Maricopa County Sheriff's Department, Maricopa County Supervisor, District 3, City of Phoenix, Rinker Materials, Rio Salado Club, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department. The group's initial recommendation includes implementing an active interagency plan to develop ways to provide enforcement and educational outreach.

In addition, the BLM law enforcement is working with Maricopa County on a patrol schedule. At this point, Maricopa County plans on making a presence at Table Mesa for the next couple of weekends. There are also tentative plans for a joint clean up of the area to take place next week. If BLM can supply a dumpster, Maricopa County will arrange to bring inmates to the site on a work detail to clean up the debris. The Phoenix Field Office will continue to work with these participants to help resolve the public health and safety issues.

Kingman Field Office

1. Subject: Managers report to BLM Kingman Field Office

Summary: BLM Kingman's newest managers have reported to duty. Wayne King, formerly with the Safford Field Office is now the Kingman field manager, and Ron Hooper, formerly the Arizona State Office Riparian Coordinator, is an assistant field manager. Kingman staff is looking forward to the new leadership.

2. Subject: Tri-State Shooting Range

BLM is continuing to work on the Tri-State Shoot Range issue, using an Environmental Alternative Dispute Resolution process through the Morris K. Udall Institute. The Mohave Tribe and Hualapai Tribe have concerns about the potential impacts from the proposed shooting range to their traditional homeland and Boundary Cone Peak which may be eligible for the National Historic Record of Places. BLM would need to initiate the Section 106 process to evaluate Boundary Cone Peak to determine its eligibility.

The face-to-face mediation began in December 2004. The Fort Mohave and Hualapai Tribes both participated. Other participants included the Arizona Game and Fish, State Lands and members of the Tri-State Shooting Recreation Center, Inc. BLM Kingman and Havasu field offices brought several new alternative locations to the table. After discussion, two locations were selected that might be acceptable. The group took a field tour to both locations. In the end, both Tribes agreed to return to their tribal leadership to review the sites and to determine if there were any concerns regarding either location. The

shooting club representatives felt both locations are too far (additional 20-25 minutes) and members/public would not be willing to drive the distance to use the facility.

The Acting Kingman Field manager also asked the Tribes to bring suggestions for alternate locations for consideration and discussion should the tribal leadership find the two sites unacceptable. The alternative dispute resolution group agreed to come together again in February. Additionally, the BLM reality specialist in Kingman has offered to pick up Tribal members and take them to the site for a field tour and to also take them to an existing shooting range to understand how it will work. So far, there has been no response. The meeting is scheduled for February 16, 2005 at the Mohave County Community College in Bullhead City, Arizona.

Safford Field Office

1. SUBJECT: Dos Pobres/San Juan Project

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Safford Field Office prepared its responses to the protests filed by the San Carlos Apache Tribe and Western Mining Action Project on the Record of Decision for the proposed copper mine and land exchange. Those materials are now under review by the Solicitor's Office in Washington prior to possible action by the Secretary of the Interior.

2. SUBJECT: Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan

ISSUE SUMMARY: A series of public open houses was held in Klondyke, West Aravaipa, Chandler, Tucson, and Thatcher/Safford during October; public input from those meetings was summarized to identify issues and concerns. The planning partners – the BLM Safford Field Office, The Nature Conservancy, and Arizona Game and Fish Department – are now gearing up for the next opportunity for public involvement in March. Teams will be created at this meeting based on resource topics and issues, and those subcommittees will work on specific parts of the Plan. The Ecosystem Plan will replace the existing Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness Management Plan, and will provide guidance for three Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. The plan includes approximately 78,000 acres comprised of BLM public lands and The Nature Conservancy's Aravaipa Canyon Preserve. It will also integrate the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health evaluation process for eight grazing allotments within the planning boundary.

3. SUBJECT: S&G Evaluations

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Safford Field Office will complete evaluations for Standards for Rangeland Health on the following allotments this year:

Bonita Creek, Johnny Creek, Zorilla, Smuggler Peak, Brushy Canyon, Whitetail, Slickrock, High Lonesome, Lazy B, Muleshoe, Soza Mesa, Gravel Pit, Bull Gap, Red Hickey Hills, Copper Creek, Saddleback, Braidfoot, and Ramsey Slide. RAC Rangeland Resource Team members are welcome to participate and should contact Phil Cooley at 928-348-4428.

4. SUBJECT: Aravaipa Canyon Interpretive Projects

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Safford Field Office volunteer site host for the Klondyke Contact Station recently installed a series of colorful new interpretive signs along the east access road through Klondyke to the wilderness trailhead. The panels, developed by the Safford Field Office and designed by a contractor, feature local history, plants and wildlife, a wilderness map, and visitor information. A new wilderness brochure is currently being published. Spring is one of the best times to hike Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness, so come and visit!

Tucson Field Office

1. SUBJECT: Tucson Basin Shooting Dialogue

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Tucson Field Office is continuing to work with the Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (Udall Center) on a dialogue to develop strategies for shooting on public lands. The membership has divided into committee to develop strategies for locations, education, safety and enforcement and natural resources. At this time, the cumulative strategies are being merged to develop information and education, including a draft website. In addition, the federal agencies have added an education component to help the public understand federal planning processes. A second public meeting is anticipated no later than April when the membership will report back to the public its recommendations and information.

2. SUBJECT: Field Trip Offered to the Ironwood Forest National Monument

ISSUE SUMMARY: The staff of the Ironwood Forest National Monument, in response to public requests, is hosting a series of seven field trips to the Ironwood Forest National Monument between December and March. The trips are organized by topic, and the public is welcome to attend one or more. The dates and topics are:

December 11, Mining; January 15, Cultural, Archaeological Resources; January 29, Wildlife waters
February 12, Grazing/Ranching; February 26, Vegetation/Biotic communities; March 5, Recreation
March 26, Wildflowers and birding

3. SUBJECT: 2004 End of Year Report Regarding Public Land Degradation as a Result of Illegal Immigration

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Tucson Field Office received \$332,000 in FY 2004 to be used on several projects to remediate impacts caused by illegal immigration. Four interns were contracted through the Student Conservation Association (SCA) to organize and coordinate clean up of the public land with various volunteers and organizations. In addition, the interns themselves have spent more than 118 hours cleaning up more than 70 cubic yards of trash left by Undocumented Immigrants (UDI). Through various assistance agreements with communities, thousands of pounds of trash are removed from the public lands each week. For example, the Town of Marana averaged 1200 to 1500 pounds of trash weekly. In addition to contracts and assistance agreements with organizations such as Youth Corps of Southern Arizona (YCOSA), volunteers from Arizona Wilderness Coalition, Humane Borders, Sky Island Alliance and other have participated in clean up and rehabilitation of public land.

Lake Havasu Field Office

1. SUBJECT: Chromium VI Groundwater Contamination Near Colorado River

ISSUE SUMMARY: Since 1951, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) has operated a natural gas compressor station (known as the Topock Station) along the Colorado River south of Needles, California. The 265-acre site encompasses public land managed by three Department of Interior agencies (BLM, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Reclamation).

Until 1970, the station discharged chromium-based corrosion and biological inhibitors used in the cooling towers into Bat Cave Wash. In 1995, groundwater sampling detected significant concentration of hexavalent chromium (CrVI), a known carcinogen, on PG&E and public lands. To address the plume of contaminated groundwater, removal actions to prevent release of CrVI into the Colorado River were authorized by the BLM, in coordination with California's Department of Toxic Substances Control

(DTSC). The proximity of the groundwater plume to the Colorado River constitutes a potential threat of contamination of a significant water supply to Arizona and California.

PG&E began time critical removal measures to initiate hydraulic control of the CrVI plume by pumping, transporting and disposing of the contaminated groundwater from existing wells on BLM public land. Between February and September 2004, approximately 6.5 million gallons of contaminated water was pumped, retracting the contaminated plume's distance from the River. The pumped water was removed and transported to facilities in the Los Angeles area.

Currently, PG&E is constructing an onsite treatment facility (scheduled completion expected in March 2005) on land recently acquired from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). Pipelines have been installed from the MW-20 bench (well pump site) to the new facility.

The project area is a Traditional Cultural Property (sacred site and landscape), and consultation with the potentially affected tribes is ongoing.

2. SUBJECT: Organizational Effectiveness Changes Occurring in Lake Havasu Field Office and Colorado River District

ISSUE SUMMARY: New Field Manager Tim Smith reports to the Lake Havasu Field Office on January 24th, filling the position left vacant in May 2004. Integration of the Colorado River District (CRD) staff began recently, with the appointment of District Engineer Britt Bowen, Environmental Protection Specialist Cathy Wolff-White, Resources Advisor Christine Bates, and Budget Analyst Samantha Carrasco. All individuals are former LHFO staff. CRD Acting District Manager Wayne King departed Lake Havasu in mid-December, to return to Safford and then begin preparing for his move to Kingman, for his new assignment as Kingman Field Manager on January 24th.

3. SUBJECT: President's Call To Service Awards Honor Lake Havasu Fisheries Volunteers

ISSUE SUMMARY: The President's "Call to Service Awards" were given this month to 19 hardworking volunteers in the Lake Havasu Fisheries Improvement Program. The National Community Service, the USA Freedom Corps and the President honor about 100 citizens throughout the nation each year with the Call to Service Award, for which each recipient has provided over 4,000 hours of volunteer service in "Take Pride in America" programs like the BLM fisheries partnership in Lake Havasu.

4. Subject: Parker 250/425 Desert Races

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Best-in-the-Desert (BITD) desert races held annually in Parker, AZ are underway for 2005. The Parker 250 involving over 85 motorcycles and quads was held on Saturday, January 8th, without incident or injury to the race participants. Low spectator participation was encountered due to rainy weather conditions prior to and during the event. The upcoming Parker 425 involving over 100 race participants driving "trophy" 2-wheel and 4-wheel drive trucks, rails, buggies, etc., is scheduled for Saturday, February 5th, and expecting several thousand spectators to be on-hand to view the race event. The Parker Chamber of Commerce estimates that the events bring over \$2 million to the Parker community annually.